

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #138, July 24 – August 13, 2009
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

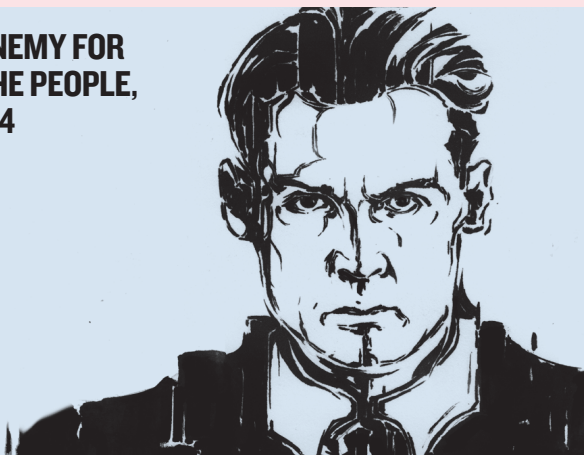


BACON AS A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION

BY ARUN GUPTA PG. 8

COVER BY JENNIFER LEW

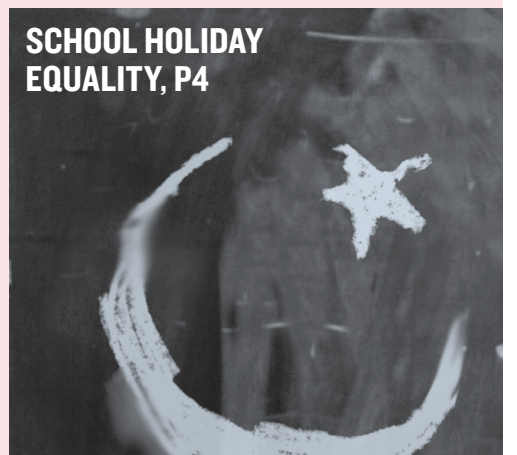
ENEMY FOR
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SCHOOL HOLIDAY
EQUALITY, P4



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The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 17 times a year on Fridays to our print and online readership of more than 100,000. The newspaper is a labor of love by a network of volunteers who do all of the reporting, writing, photography, illustration, editing, designing, distribution, fundraising and website management. Since 2000, more than 600 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have contributed their energy to this project. Winner of dozens of New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging people to produce their own media. *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising from organizations with similar missions. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of ordinary people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Indypendent is the newspaper project of the New York City Independent Media Center, which is affiliated with the global Indymedia movement (indymedia.org), an international network that is dedicated to fostering grassroots media production. NYC IMC sponsors three other volunteer projects: the children’s newspaper *IndyKids*, the IndyVideo news team and the NYC IMC open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

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community calendar

Send us your events for the next issue by August 5.

ONGOING THROUGH AUG 13

Tue-Sat: 10am-6pm • FREE
EXHIBIT: BASIL WOLVERTON.
Godfather cartoonist Basil Wolverton influenced a generation of underground cartoonists like R. Crumb, John Holmstrom and important punk rock titans, like The Ramones.
Gladstone Gallery, 515 W 24th St
gladstonegallery.com • 212-206-9300

TUES JUL 28

3pm • FREE
LECTURE: THE NEW YORK CITY ORIGINS OF THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT. Historian Warren Shaw discusses how NYC was on the forefront of the disability rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s. (RSVP Required)
Third Root Community Center
380 Marlborough Rd, Bklyn
events@thirdroot.org • thirdroot.org
718-940-9343

7pm • \$5 SUGGESTED DONATION
OPEN MIC: WOMEN’S/TRANS’ POETRY JAM. The jam is hosted by Vittoria Repetto, the hardest working guinea butch dyke poet on the Lower East Side.
Bluestockings, 172 Allen St
bluestockings.com • 212-777-6028

7:30pm • \$6/\$10/\$15 SLIDING SCALE
FILM: THE APOCRYPHA: ANGER AND DISAPPOINTMENT. Join us for the screening of two nonfiction works of Italian communist director Pier Paolo Pasolini.
Brecht Forum, 451 West St
brechtforum.org • 212-242-4201

WED JULY 29

8pm • \$15
THEATRE: THE MATTACHINE PROJECT, 18TH ANNUAL HOT! FESTIVAL. The Mattachine Project will explore the origins of modern homosexuality and gay liberation.
Dixon Place, 161 Chrystie St
dixonpl.org • 212-219-0736

8pm • \$10 ADVANCE, \$12 DAY OF SHOW
CONCERT: EBONY BONES. London’s one-of-a-kind producer, songwriter and

performer crosses the lines between comic-colored charters, Caribbean queens and African rhythms. Her lyrics describe British authorities’ mistreatment and the racial tension in post-7/7 Britain with all the energy of a young Macy Grey.
Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St
boweryballroom.com

FRI JULY 31

7pm • \$15 ADMISSION
CONCERT: THE VIVIAN GIRLS/THESE ARE POWERS. The Vivian Girls are a chameleonic trio of girls that cross the lines between innocent 1960s girl-group sounds, punk rock and powerful, sonic shoegaze.
Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Ave (at 75th St)
whitney.org • 212-570-3600

1pm • FREE
WORKSHOP: LAPTOP STAR GALACTICA. Want to pimp your MySpace? Research colleges? Edit video? Just search the web? Ages 12-18 only.
Wakefield Center for Reading & Writing
4100 Lowerre Pl, Bronx
Wakefield@nypl.org • 718-652-4663

TUE AUG 4

6pm-9pm • FREE
EXHIBIT: HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ART EXHIBIT. This features NYC high school artwork and music by Mahina Movement and Taiyo Na with a list of speakers also involved. (RSVP by Aug 2)
Brooklyn Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon St
hatecrimesprevention@gmail.com
heiroku.net

WED AUG 5

6:30pm-8:30pm • FREE
DISCUSSION: TRANSJUSTICE GENERAL MEETING. People of color who identify as trans, gender non-conforming, gender variant, gender deviant, butch lesbians, drag queens, bi-gendered, two-spirit, drag kings, femme queens, A.G., genderqueer, non-gendered, andro, crossdressers and gender-benders are welcome.
International Action Center, 55 W 17th St, 5th Fl • mvazquez@alp.org
718-596-0342

reader comments

ORGANIZING PEOPLE FOR SINGLE PAYER
Responses to “Fighting to Cure a Sick System,” June 26:

I fully support a single payer system but the profit-greedy insurance industry has Congress in their back pocket. We have a totally corrupt political system where only lobbyists money counts.

—NATHAN KAYALE

All forms of direct nonviolent action to get attention and awareness seem like a good thing. Howard Zinn discusses such actions in his book, *You Can’t Be Neutral on A Moving Train*. Zinn makes this point: You never know what action, no matter how small, might have an effect on someone. Noam Chomsky calls the gap between what the people want and what the government wants/does the “democracy gap”. People need to know their power. Glen Ford

Post your own comments online at the end of each article at indypendent.org or email letters@indypendent.org.

(blackagenda.com) recently spoke in a meeting of the Harlem Tenants Council combined with Take Back WBAI at St. Mary’s church in Manhattan. He talked about the corporatization going on, and this comment sticks with me: “The only power stronger than organized money is organized people.”

—SANDA

REVISITING CONSTITUTIONAL PROMISES
Responses to “Growing Up Homeless,” June 26:

The draconian twists and turns of the shelter system are familiar to me from having advocated on behalf of people trying to house their families. At first I was shocked at the lack of compassion and just plain cold-heartedness of the city’s Department of Homeless Services workers, eventually it became second nature to see them throw families out for violating

one of their many mysterious regulations. Often they tried to send people back to abusive homes, homes they had never lived in with family they did not know, or to apartments where their presence would cause the lease-holders to face eviction. As long as they could get the person out of their face they did not care at all.

—MAX

These are not “new homeless.” This has always been the case, since *Newsweek* entered the term “Homeless” in the American Lexicon, in December 1984. Back then it was just another Reagan Hard Luck Christmas magazine cover ... I remember well. I looked at the world pass by from a cardboard box in those days. (I am stable in a rented room now.) Back then we were mostly young men. Veterans (like myself), out of work tradesmen, construction workers, laid-off factory workers;

bread winners for their families. I saw young couples bringing up their young ones in the street. Those young people are now in their 20s, and are struggling to raise their kids in the street. This would be the third generation of young people to call the streets of the United States their “home.” The Republicrats dismantled the social safety net decades ago. We are back to square one now.

—MIKE MARTINEZ

JUL—AUG



THURSDAY JULY 30

1pm • FREE
D.C. ACTION: SINGLE-PAYER RALLY! Join unions, doctors, nurses, seniors and faith groups as they celebrate Medicare’s 44th birthday, lobby Congress to create a national, single-payer healthcare system and demand passage of HR 676. PHOTO: FLIKR/NESRI email@healthcare-now.org • healthcare-now.org

FRI AUG 7

10pm • FREE
ACTION: CENTRAL PARK MOONLIGHT. Come enjoy a relaxing ride highlighting the park’s beautiful ponds, waterways, vistas and structures.
Meet at Columbus Circle (SW corner of Central Park).
212-802-8222 • times-up.org

MON AUG 10

7pm • FREE
READING: SARABANDE BOOKS. Indie Press Series honors the work of small independent publishers. This week’s reading features Sarabande Books authors Gabriel Fried (*Making the New Lamb Take*) and Cate Marley (*Fragments of the Head of a Queen*).
McNally Jackson, 52 Prince St
mcnallyjackson.com • 212-274-1160

6pm-8pm • FREE
SEMINAR: SEX & THE CITY. A series of seminars focusing on the history and contemporary experiences of sexual and gender minorities in particular LGBT people in the U.S. city from the late 19th century to the present. Presented by the CUNY Center for Lesbian & Gay Studies. (RSVP Required)
LGBT Center, 208 W 13th St, Rm 101

clags.org • clagsevents@gc.cuny.edu
212-817-1955

MON AUG 24 – THUR AUG 27

10am-4pm • \$25-\$75 SLIDING SCALE (PER SESSION)
WORKSHOPS: TEACHERS UNITE ACTIVIST COURSE. This 4-day seminar takes on topics including understanding power and oppression, a social history of New York City public schools, education reform, and social justice. Organized by Teachers Unite! (RSVP Required)
Support Center for Nonprofit Management, 305 Seventh Ave, 11th Fl
Teachersunite.net/register
info@teachersunite.net • 212-675-4790

WED AUG 19 – SEPT 26

Wed-Fri: 12pm-6pm, Sat-Sun 2pm-6pm
FREE
EXHIBIT: IS THIS RECYCLABLE? Artists in various media utilize found objects, recycled materials, ready-made objects and non-traditional materials for the creation of their artwork.
Under Minerva Gallery and Event Space, 656 5th Ave, Park Slope, Bklyn
718-788-0170 • info@underminerva.com
underminerva.com

Next Issue: August 14



Bronx Cookie Workers Fight Buyout

By Sarah Secunda

Striking Stella D’oro Biscuit Co. workers ended their 11-month strike July 7 after winning a sweeping judgment from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) that their employer, Brynwood Partners, had engaged in unlawful labor practices. However, the Bronx bakery workers now find themselves racing to save their jobs after the private equity firm, based in Greenwich, Conn., announced that it would close the factory by October.

While Brynwood’s ultimate course of action remains uncertain, the Stella workers and their supporters are focusing on snack food giant Lance Inc., based in Charlotte, N.C.

Mike Filippou, a shop steward with the Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) International Union Local 50, which represents the Stella D’oro workers, says the union has learned that Brynwood is in negotiations to sell the Stella D’oro brand, but not the factory, to Lance.

Lance, which has a non-union workforce of 5,000, posted sales of \$825.5 million for 2008 and has a market value of \$769 million as of July 14. (Lance did not respond to *The Independent’s* request for comment.)

Filippou says that Local 50 has received offers from buyers who would keep the cookie plant and its 136 jobs in the Bronx, but that Brynwood Partners has refused to consider these offers.

The Stella workers and their supporters are now channeling their efforts into building the political and community support they believe is going to be necessary to force the company’s hand. The workers’ battle with Brynwood began in August 2008 when they went on strike after the private equity firm demanded that they accept pay cuts of as much as 26 percent, as well as reductions in holidays, sick days and health coverage.

On July 22, 45 community members and labor activists, including 20 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3, rallied in the Financial District outside the headquarters of Goldman Sachs, one of Lance’s largest shareholders.

“There’s no doubt Lance will move pro-



STEPPING UP: Longtime Stella D’oro Biscuit Co. worker Eddie Marrero (left) challenges New York City Comptroller and mayoral candidate William Thompson, Jr. (right) to keep his promise to help the workers during a press conference in the Bronx July 13. PHOTO: JOEL COOK

duction if they buy that brand,” said Micah Landau of the Stella Workers Solidarity Committee. “Lance might get cold feet if they see people going to their investors.”

The workers and their supporters plan to stage future protests at the headquarters of other top Lance shareholders based in New York City, such as Barclays.

The Stella D’oro dispute has also begun to attract the support of high-profile politicians, including City Comptroller and mayoral candidate William Thompson, Jr., who jumped on board July 13 with a press conference outside the factory gates at Broadway and 237th Street.

Calling Brynwood’s behavior “disgraceful,” the mayoral candidate promised to “squeeze the company” by pressuring public pension funds invested in Brynwood to divest.

Among known Brynwood investors is the Pennsylvania State Employees’ Retirement System (SERS), one of the nation’s largest public employee pension funds, with more than 200,000 members and \$26.2 billion in assets. According to a 2008 year-end report, SERS has more than \$9.9 million invested in Brynwood and has committed another \$10 million to the fund.

New Talent Joins *The Independent*



Elizabeth Henderson

By Jacquie Simone

The Independent has hired a new assistant general coordinator. Elizabeth Henderson, who began volunteering with *The Independent* in April 2008, will join Jessica Lee in leading the newspaper, which is produced by a diverse team of volunteer journalists, artists, photographers and media activists.

“My work as a volunteer was incredibly meaningful to me and showed me that there were publications out there that did exactly what I was looking for: combine political and social activism with journalism,” said Henderson, 24.

The general coordinator position was vacated in March by John Tarleton, who had worked with the newspaper since 2001. More than 70 people applied for the position. The application process included interviews, and writing and editing tests.

The Independent has seen many changes over its nine years, including shifts in leadership. As an experiment in participatory citizen journalism, the paper relies on coordinators to organize its network of volunteers.

“With her skills, experience and boundless energy, we knew Liz would be a natural fit with *The Independent*,” said Lee, who was part of the eight-person hiring committee.

Henderson received her Bachelor of Arts in journalism and political science at Sarah Lawrence College before attending the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism this past year. Her previous experience includes interning at *The American Prospect*, *City Limits* and *The Nation*. She was editor-in-chief of the bi-weekly student newspaper, *The Phoenix*, at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y.

Henderson said she hopes to increase *The Independent’s* local coverage, expand distribution of the newspaper throughout the five boroughs, and help improve the paper and website.

“I still have to pinch myself to remember that this isn’t a dream,” Henderson said. “I’m actually getting paid to do work that I love and work with so many fabulous, dedicated people who are committed to independent citizen journalism that challenges the status quo.”

TACKLED BICYCLIST SUES NYPD

By Julia Dunn

It’s been one year since NYPD officer Patrick Pogan slammed Christopher Long off his bicycle in Times Square during a Critical Mass ride July 25, 2008.

Luckily for Long, the incident was captured on video by a nearby tourist (see still frames at left). New York City-based video activists immediately took action and tracked down the tourist and purchased the clip for \$310.

The 70-second video was posted to YouTube two days later and immediately went viral, ultimately receiving more than two million views.

“It’s an amazing example of how video can impact what’s going on,” said Bill DiPaola, executive director of Times Up!, a local environmental direct action organization.

It’s likely the video will again get attention, this time in the courtroom. On July 7, Long filed a \$1.5 million civil lawsuit against the NYPD.

The role the video has played has already



been momentous. The city initially charged Long with attempted assault of an officer, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct, but dropped all charges against Long last September, most likely because of the online video. Pogan later admitted to filing a false testimony in his police report and resigned in February.

“This was a smoking gun, not just of police brutality and violent suppression of political speech, but more important a window into how NYPD is infested with a culture of systematic lying,” said Vlad Teichberg, a member of the Glass Bead Collective video activist group.

August marks the fifth anniversary of the police department’s violent crackdown of the once popular Critical Mass monthly bicycle ride. On Aug. 27, 2004, during the Republican National Convention, more than 5,000 bicyclists took over Manhattan streets to protest the Bush administration and advocate for bicycle-friendly neighborhoods. At the end of the ride near St. Marks Church, the NYPD stormed in arresting some 260 people and confiscating hundreds of bicycles.

The rides have continued on the last Friday of each month, but numbers have dwindled since 2004 as a result of the regular heavy police presence and disruption of the ride by issuing summons to riders for minor traffic violations and not having proper bicycle lights.

A Call for Equal Holidays

By JOHN CHENG

Last December, seven-year-old Huyam Belguet stayed home to celebrate Eid Ul-Adha, one of the holiest days on the Islamic calendar, while her first-grade class went to see *The Nutcracker* at Lincoln Center.

Huyam’s mother, Isabel Bucaram, tried to explain the importance of celebrating a holiday central to their faith, but Huyam was upset and confused. “Why is school not closed?” she asked.

The Coalition for Muslim School Holidays, an alliance of more than 80 religious, immigrant, education and labor organizations, is working to ensure that in the future, schoolchildren will no longer have to ask this question.

The Muslim holidays of Eid Ul-Adha and Eid Ul-Fitr, also known as the Eids, are currently not observed in New York City public schools. Christian and Jewish holidays, on the other hand, are recognized.

Bucaram, 36, who lives in Astoria, Queens, joined the coalition’s campaign for recognition of the Eids in February 2009.

The coalition was formed after the 2006 Regents exams fell on Eid Ul-Adha, spurring an outcry among Muslim parents and students.

Muslims represent one of the fastest growing religious communities in New York City. Approximately 600,000 Muslims live in the city, according to Columbia University’s Middle East Institute.

Currently, about 100,000 public school students — one in 10 — are Muslim, according to a 2008 report by Columbia University’s Teachers College.

Proponents of Muslim school holidays argue that recognizing the first days of Eid Ul-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, and Eid Ul-Adha, which commemorates the prophet Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his son, would require only a minor adjustment to the school calendar and would spare Mus-

lim students from make-up work and allow them to freely celebrate their religion.

At the outset, the coalition focused on mobilizing members of the Muslim community and increasing awareness about the Eids.

However, more than a year ago, the coalition started focusing its efforts on convincing the City Council to pass a resolution calling on the mayor to recognize the Eids as school holidays.

The coalition’s varied tactics, from rallies and letter-writing to lobbying council members and speaking at council hearings, were rewarded June 30 when the City Council passed a non-binding resolution calling for the Eids to be incorporated into the school calendar.

The resolution was sponsored by the council’s only Muslim member, Robert Jackson, a Democrat who represents District 7 in Upper Manhattan and chairs the council’s Education Committee.

“It’s the best expression, and most sincere expression of tolerance by allowing these holidays,” said Sadiq Abdul Malik, 55, who worships at a mosque in the Bronx and was at the City Council meeting with other coalition members when the resolution was approved.

However, since the resolution is non-binding and Mayor Michael Bloomberg has publicly stated he will ignore the legislation, the council’s efforts are only symbolic.

“One of the problems you have with a diverse city is that if you close the schools for every single holiday, there won’t be any school,” Bloomberg said June 30.

However, there may be hope for such legislation in the New York Legislature. In 2007, a bill preventing standardized tests from being held on religious holidays, including the Eids, was signed into law.

The state legislature is also considering a bill sponsored by Assemblyman Michael Benjamin (D-Bronx) and State Senator Bill Perkins (D-Harlem), that would require New York



City public schools to recognize the Eids.

Local legislation has already been passed in Dearborn, Mich., and several New Jersey townships including Trenton, Paterson and Atlantic City.

According to Bakary Camara, the public relations officer for the Gambian Society of New York, if the state legislature passed the bill, “There would be no more discussion from the mayor.”

Faced with limited funding, the coalition is hesitant to sue the school system. Rabbi Michael Feinberg, who heads the Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition, an organization that has been involved with the issue of Muslim school holidays, said a lawsuit would be costly and would fail to inspire broad civic participation.

Though coalition organizers are hopeful about the state legislation, they were initially

concerned that members of the legislature who did not represent New York City residents and were not familiar with the issue would have been less effective than previous efforts lobbying city council members, Camara said.

As the coalition continues to pressure Bloomberg to recognize the resolution, Bucaram remains worried that she will have to pull her daughter and two-year-old son, Haanny, out of school in order to observe the Eids in the future.

If her children couldn’t celebrate, said Bucaram, “It would be an empty day for me, as a parent, and as a person.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
nycpp.org
cair-ny.org

Blind Justice

By JOHN TARLETON

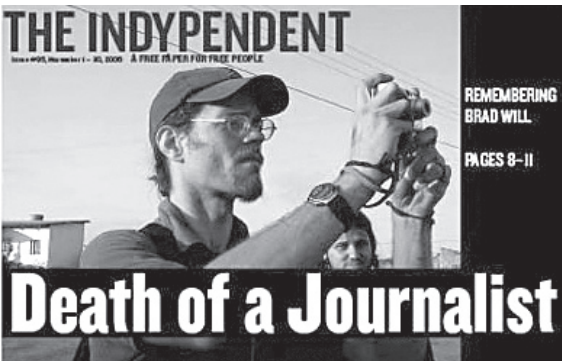
Supporters of slain New York City Indymedia journalist Brad Will are calling for the immediate release of Juan Manuel Martínez Moreno after a Mexican judge ruled that Moreno could be held in prison indefinitely in a murder investigation that activists say has gone horribly wrong.

“As a friend I have been sickened, as his family has been sickened, by the ways in which Brad’s murder has been used by the Mexican government to further brutalize, intimidate and imprison the very people with whom Brad stood in solidarity in 2006,” said Mark Read, an New York University film professor who was a friend of Will’s and one of the organizers of the July 13 demonstration in support of Moreno held outside the Mexican Consulate at 27 East 39th Street. The rally drew about 20 people.

The protesters also demanded that the U.S. terminate the Mérida Initiative, a three-year program that was launched in 2008 and is slated to provide \$1.6 billion in equipment and training to the military and police forces in Mexico, seven Central American nations, the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Will, 36, was shot and killed Oct. 27, 2006, while filming anti-government demonstrations in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. Several local officials were filmed and photographed in broad daylight firing in the direction of Will and anti-government protesters. Two of these gunmen, Orlando Manuel Aguilar Coello and Abel Santiago Zarate, were briefly detained after Will’s death but were soon released when Oaxacan authorities mistakenly asserted that the two bullets that killed Brad did not come from a .38 revolver, the same gun that both of the men had been carrying that day.

Mexican officials have instead insisted on pursuing the theory that Will was shot at close range by protesters seeking to embarrass the government. Martínez Moreno, who was not on the



The Independent, November 2006

same street as Will when the incident occurred, was originally arrested and charged with Will’s murder on Oct. 24, 2008, days before the Mexican government would have faced a reduction in U.S. funding due to its failure to make progress in solving Will’s case. According to Harry Bubbins of Friends of Brad Will, more than half a dozen Oaxacan activists who came to Will’s aid after he was shot also face arrest warrants after volunteering to testify to Mexican investigators about the case.

On Jan. 19, Judge Rosa Pérez ruled that there was insufficient evidence to merit pressing charges against Martínez Moreno, a baker and father of three young children. However, on July 8, she reversed her previous decision and agreed to accept evidence from two “eyewitnesses” with close ties to the local government. While both witnesses have admitted they were not present at the crime scene, they claim that they heard Martínez Moreno was responsible for Will’s shooting.

“If they allow testimony by people who weren’t there and who didn’t see what happened ... then that’s a bad sign they are going to try and frame him,” Bubbins said.

No trial date has been set.

Carlos Davalos contributed reporting to this article. For more information about Brad Will, visit independent.org.

Workers File Lawsuit Against Scoop NYC

A group of 15 former employees filed a lawsuit July 8 against Scoop NYC for unpaid wages and violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Cary Kane LLP, the law firm representing the fired workers, estimated that the upscale retail chain owes employees more than \$300,000 in unpaid overtime wages and \$200,000 in lost earnings since they were terminated.

The lawsuit states that former stock and security employees who worked at store locations in New York and New Jersey regularly worked 50 to 60 hours a week but did not receive overtime pay. According to workers, while they were promoted to managerial positions, they were ineligible for overtime pay because they were given a fixed salary instead of hourly wages.

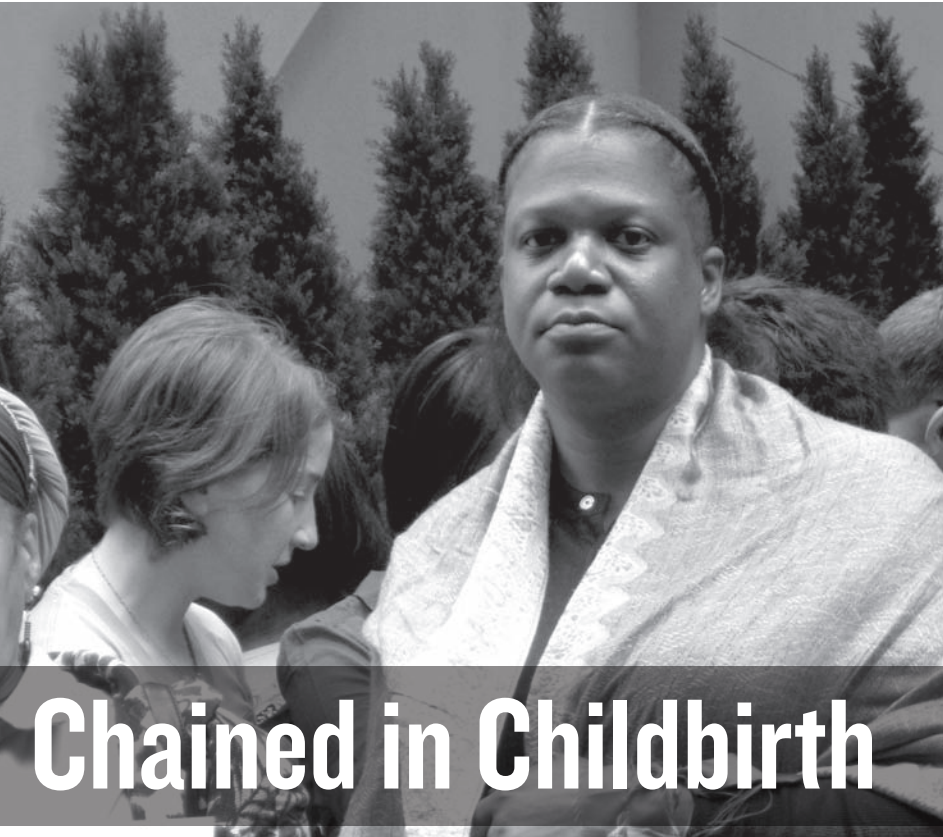
“They used me,” said former employee Georges Epoh, a Cameroonian immigrant. “That was just a name, to say I was a manager.”

Workers also complained of infrequent breaks and unsafe working conditions, such as loose wires and stockrooms without insulation.

Most plaintiffs in the lawsuit are West African immigrants. According to Retail Action Project (RAP), which helped the workers find legal representation, Scoop NYC fired seven of these immigrant workers without warning in late 2008, claiming they were undocumented, even though they had valid documents.

“What happened to the Scoop NYC workers happened because they were immigrants,” said RAP coordinator Carrie Gleason. “This is an issue that affects every resident throughout the city.”

—JACQUIE SIMONE



Chained in Childbirth

UNBINDING PREGNANT INMATES: Toya Murray, who was shackled during labor while serving a prison sentence, joined a July 9 rally urging Gov. Paterson to ban the practice in New York. PHOTO: JACQUIE SIMONE

By JACQUIE SIMONE

Childbirth is a painful and difficult experience for most women, but Toya Murray says for her, it was torture. Like many other incarcerated women across New York state, she was shackled immediately before and after giving birth.

“When it was due for me to have my baby, they shackled my hands and feet when I went into labor to go to the hospital,” Murray said.

Murray was pregnant when she began serving a 15-month sentence for a nonviolent crime at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester County in 1996. She was often shackled when transported between facilities, but said she never experienced anything like the discomfort of being restrained during labor, when she was unable to move her arms or legs. She worried that her child’s safety would be jeopardized since she had little control over her body.

Once the baby was born safely, Murray’s ability to hold her newborn was limited by the metal shackles. What should have been a tender moment between mother and child was awkward and restricted.

“Anything could have happened when the baby came out. I felt very uncomfortable,” Murray said. She told her story outside Gov. David Paterson’s Manhattan office July 9, at a rally held to end the shackling of inmates before and after delivery.

A coalition of more than ten organizations worked to push anti-shackling legislation through both the New York State Senate and Assembly in May. This network, which includes the Correctional Association of New York, Human Rights Watch and Women on the Rise Telling HerStory (WORTH), is now waiting for Gov. Paterson to sign the bill.

The bill bans the use of restraints on incarcerated women during labor and post-delivery recovery, and limits the use of restraints during transportation to and from hospitals. It was passed unanimously in the New York State Senate and overwhelmingly in the state Assembly.

The decision to use restraints during labor and childbirth is currently within the purview of individual correctional officers. The bill creates uniform statewide standards and only permits one wrist restraint during transportation if the pregnant woman has an exceptionally high risk of injuring herself or personnel.

In 2004, an estimated 4 percent of women in state prisons, 3 percent of women in

federal prisons and 5 percent of women in jail were pregnant.

Illinois, California, Vermont, Texas and New Mexico are currently the only states that have laws prohibiting the shackling of women in labor.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Public Health Association have condemned shackling because it causes severe pain and trauma, according to a legislative report released May 20 by Sen. Velmanette Montgomery (D-Brooklyn). The Center for Reproductive Rights stated that shackling prevents a woman from moving to alleviate contraction pains. This increases stress on the woman’s body and may decrease the flow of oxygen to her fetus.

Additionally, Serena Alfieri, associate director of policy for the Women in Prison Project, explained that shackling often delays transportation to the hospital.

“Putting shackles around your ankles, arms and around your waist and connecting them to your arms is a process,” Alfieri said. “If you are in labor, that process could be torture for you.”

The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) recently took up the issue with a report entitled, “Access to Reproductive Healthcare in New York State Jails.”

“We found that of the 66 local correctional facilities [in New York state], only three had written policies about the use of shackles and only two actually prohibited it altogether,” said Ami Sanghvi, a NYC-LU staff attorney. She considers shackling women in labor a violation of the Eighth Amendment, which prohibits cruel and unusual punishment.

According to a statement released by rally organizers, prisons in New York City have restricted the use of restraints on incarcerated women during labor since 1990. Since then, there have been no reported incidents of escape or harm to medical or correctional staff.

“Shackling cannot be justified as a measure necessary to prevent escape: women cannot run with any significant level of speed during labor or recovery after delivery,” the statement read.

Former inmate and mother Jeana Marie recalls her experience of giving birth in shackles.

“Being handcuffed took away from the special moment of my child’s birth and made me feel like less of a mother,” she said. “It was a very emotionally difficult experience.”

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No Sign of Economy’s Green Shoots

By Max Fraad Wolff

Over the last few months a chorus has risen to a deafening volume. Pundits and talking heads sing of green shoots and economic rebound. As strange as it seems, they sing of renewal not because the economy is getting better these days, but because it is getting worse at a slower pace than during the financial meltdown that began last fall.

Many observers focus on the gross domestic product (GDP) which determines the presence or absence of economic growth. The GDP fell by 5.5 percent in the first three months of 2009 and fell by 6.3 percent in the last three months of 2008. It is likely that by year end GDP will be largely flat.

However, reducing a national economy of many moving pieces and trillions of interactions between people in the United States and around the world to a single number such as the GDP is difficult. So even if we technically exit recession later this year, which is not a given, most people will not notice an improvement in their fortunes because of their position in the economy.

In this recession, as an old saying in the real estate business goes, the three most important factors are “location, location, location.” It is a fitting description for a recession born, in part, of a real estate boom gone terribly bust. Recently there has been a profound parting of ways between well-positioned people and industries and most Americans.

Many people are hurting. House prices are falling. Work is hard to find and hard to keep. Overtime and benefits have become scarce. Prices have not fallen for our basic needs. Crime rates have risen. Economic problems and stress have put millions of people on the edge or over it.

OUT OF WORK

Unemployment is high and rising. As of July 1, the national unemployment rate was 9.5 percent. If we use the broadest measure (called U6 by the government), which adds in folks who have given up looking and involuntary part-timers, the rate is 16.5 percent. There are 14.7 million Americans officially unemployed, up from 7.5 million in December 2007. There are 4.4 million people who have been unemployed for more than half a year. Clearly, the hordes of unemployed are in the wrong location in our economy.

Many homeowners are also in a bad spot. In 2008, 3.1 million foreclosure filings took place. In the first half of 2009, 1.9 million foreclosures were filed. Foreclosures are increasingly driven by unemployment. Prime mortgage borrowers, made to people with higher credit scores — and often larger incomes — now account for more new foreclosure notices than sub-prime borrowers. Late payment and default rates on credit cards, auto loans and home equity lines of credit are also high and rising.

Autoworkers and the growing multitude of former autoworkers are in another poor economic position. The GM and Chrysler bankruptcies have resulted in 2,000 auto dealerships closing, costing over 50,000 jobs directly. This will add to unemployment, sap local tax rolls and hurt other businesses, neighborhoods and towns.

The elimination of 21,000 United Auto Workers (UAW) hourly workers from GM is a drop in the more than 1 million jobs that may be lost as a result of the bankruptcies, according to the Center for Automotive Research. In 1979 GM had 450,000 U.S. employees; at the end of 2009 it will have 41,000.



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Remaining employees will have fewer benefits, less job security, a weaker union and millions of shares in GM and Chrysler/Fiat. The UAW has also given up the right to strike at the two companies through 2015. Taxpayers have pumped over \$100 billion into GM, Chrysler/Fiat, auto parts makers and tax cuts for new vehicle sales.

There are some bright spots. Federal assistance has allowed millions to remain on the unemployment rolls longer. There are presently 2.5 million Americans receiving unemployment benefits because of extensions that allow for up to 33 additional weeks of benefits.

On the other hand, California is considering slashing welfare assistance to 500,000 residents and healthcare to over 900,000 low-income children. California is not alone in cutting assistance to the most vulnerable because of huge state budget deficits and an unwillingness to raise taxes. The National Governors Association reports that 41 states reduced budgets in 2009 by an average of 2 percent. Most estimates suggest budgets will be cut by up to 3 percent in 2010. Federal assistance from the Reinvestment and Recovery Act is helping states but not enough to offset falling taxes completely. State workers are facing wage cuts, lost days, reduced benefits and public anger.

HEALTHCARE OVERHAUL

The United States remains the only developed nation without national health insurance. Historically Americans received health coverage through their employers, but now less than 60 percent of employed Americans get job-based health insurance.

About 46 million Americans, particularly those who are younger or have low incomes, are without insurance at some point every year. Healthcare costs have been rising much faster than wages for the last 30 years, even as we have some of the worst health indices in the developed world.

If Congress passes any healthcare plan this year it will likely be a version of the Wyden-Bennett Plan, in which federal and

state governments provide subsidies to low- and moderate-income Americans and mandate that they purchase health insurance or enter a public plan. Issues with the plan include disputes over state versus private economic activity, the cost of the plan and its ability to extend quality, affordable care to all Americans.

The Obama administration and Congress are attempting to build a mixed healthcare system that leaves for-profit insurers and employer-based coverage in place while leaving some people out. We will have more state involvement and shouldering of costs. This plan may prove very expensive and politically polarizing over the coming years. More people will have care and for many the plan may be helpful.

THE NATIONAL BUDGET DEFICIT AND DEBT FIASCO

A Reagan-era trend of cutting taxes and increasing spending went into overdrive with the recent Bush administration. He nearly doubled the national debt from \$5.7 trillion in 2001 to \$10.6 trillion by 2009. The first two years of the new administration will rack up 60 percent of the entire debt America had in 2001. The Congressional Budget Office estimates a 2009 budget deficit of \$1.8 trillion and a 2010 budget deficit of \$1.4 trillion.

How did we get so far down this road? American business and wealthy individuals have loved and pushed for tax cuts for decades without massive cuts in government spending. Foreign interests own \$3.2 trillion of our debt and foreign government agencies own \$2.3 trillion of our debt. This is changing America’s position in the world and adding powerful foreign voices to every policy decision we make.

THE STIMULUS SAVIOR?

In response to the speed and depth of the economic crisis, Congress and the Obama administration passed a \$787 billion stimulus package. Despite the eye-popping price tag, the stimulus is designed to reduce the depth and duration of the downturn by filling some of the massive and rising revenue gaps on the

state and local levels, and easing the length of and rise in unemployment.

Through July 2009 about 15 to 20 percent of the stimulus money has been spent. As with most Obama policies, the stimulus is gradual and moderate in scope and was not designed to change the way the U.S. economy works.

Like the trillions being spent or loaned by the U.S. Treasury and Federal Reserve System to the finance and banking sectors, the aim of the stimulus seems to be to return America to the economy we had from 2001 to 2007. This period may look idyllic now, but policies and economic decisions made during these years play a big role in our current difficulties.

The economic downturn has been bad news for everyone. Some were helped back to strength fast and full. Goldman Sachs reported a \$3.44 billion profit for April to June 2009, and JP Morgan Chase reported \$2.7 billion. These firms were beneficiaries of access to government credit at very low interest rates coupled with a dramatic increase in U.S. and foreign stock markets over the last few months. Many of their competitors have been closed or crippled and no new regulations have been passed. This has created a sweet spot in the crisis for the largest, best-managed and most nimble financial firms.

These firms are not alone. The early evidence is that rebound is largely concentrated in a few already favored locations. This offers us a dual warning. One, inequality is growing. This is alarming, given how unequal the distributions of wealth and income were in America before the present downturn. Two, we have yet to see any significant evidence of the much-heralded change that so many want and need. It remains to be seen how the public handles mounting evidence of big bills and small change.

Max Wolff is an economics instructor in International Affairs at The New School and blogs for the Huffington Post.

Georgia Parents Fight Military High School

By JIMMY TOBIAS

The U.S. Marine Corps and the DeKalb County Board of Education, school board have postponed their plans to establish a military-themed high school after more than 100 parents, students, peace activists and veterans in the Atlanta-area community waged a two-month campaign against it.

“No one had successfully opposed one of these schools before,” said Tim Franzen, the American Friends Service Committee staffer who helped lead the campaign. “We had to go up against the board of education and possibly the most powerful entity in the world, the American military-industrial complex.”

The activists fought the school because they believe it would be used as a tool to recruit youth in the Atlanta suburbs into the military, a charge both the school’s planners and Marine Corps have denied.

The DeKalb Marine Institute (DMI), which was scheduled to open on Aug. 10, has been postponed indefinitely.

Dale Davis, a spokesman for the DeKalb County Board of Education, said that the opposition did not have an impact on the local school board’s decision to put DMI on hold. Instead, he attributed the decision to the Marine Corps’ failure to sign a “memorandum of agreement,” which would have committed it to funding and operating the project at an initial cost of \$1.4 million.

Franzen and local activists are skeptical of Davis’ claim.

“We showed up at every single [school] board meeting, first with dozens and then with at least a hundred people,” Franzen

said. “By June, we were controlling the story, dominating the public discourse and our campaign was all over the press. ... As a result, we put them in the hot seat.”

The decision in Georgia comes as the military is taking an ever-increasing role in U.S. public education. The *Associated Press* reported June 28 that the Marine Corps is in discussion with at least six school districts — including locations in suburban Atlanta, Las Vegas and New Orleans. These schools will require students to wear a uniform, participate in Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) and take military classes.

Obama’s Secretary of Education Arne Duncan championed military high schools during his seven-year tenure as CEO of the Chicago school district, helping to open five military-themed schools.

The military academies are part of a greater trend, as the U.S. military works to increase the number of JROTC programs. Last year, the JROTC program received funding in a defense policy bill to increase the number of units from 3,400 to 3,700 in the next 11 years.

“I think what we are seeing today is a new infusion of militarism into our schools,” said Arlene Inouye of the Coalition for Alternatives to Militarism in Our Schools. “It is subtle, but it is embedding education with a military structure. ... It is always done insidiously, behind the backs of the community. It is the military way.”

Although other communities, such as Chicago, have rallied against military academies, they have had little success in stopping them.

“Teachers in Chicago have been fight-



RE-EDUCATION: Activists in Atlanta, Ga., waged a two-month campaign to oppose the establishment of a military-themed high school. The U.S. Marine Corps and the DeKalb County Board of Education hoped to open the school Aug. 10. PHOTO: TIM FRANZEN

ing [the schools], but they have not been able to stop it the same way they have in Atlanta,” Inouye said. “DeKalb is considered a model in terms of organizing and coalition building with students, parents, teachers and veterans.”

According to a resolution written by the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, the group hopes to challenge the military schools by arguing that it is illegal for the Department of Defense to recruit children under the age of 17 for military service, as stated in the 2002 Optional Protocol to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The DeKalb activists are aware that their purported victory may be short-lived. In a June 2 press release announcing the post-

ponement of DMI, the DeKalb County school system said that it “will continue to communicate with the Marine Corps with hopes of finalizing an agreement. If accomplished, the school system will move forward with plans to open the school in August of 2010.”

Latasha Walker, who has a daughter enrolled in a DeKalb county school system, and was active in the campaign, recognizes the need to keep pressure on the school board.

“We definitely need to continue making sure that they never build a DMI,” she said. “The school board is very sneaky.”

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THE INDEPENDENT JULY 24 – AUGUST 13, 2009 7

BACON as a weapon of MASS DESTRUCTION

BY ARUN GUPTA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JENNIFER LEW AND RYAN DUNSMUIR

Among my fondest childhood memories is savoring a strip of perfectly cooked bacon that had just been dragged through a puddle of maple syrup. It was an illicit pleasure; varnishing the fatty, salty, smoky bacon with sweet arboreal sap felt taboo. How could such simple ingredients produce such riotous flavors?

That was then. Today, you don't need to tax yourself applying syrup to bacon — McDonald's does it all for you with the McGriddle. It conveniently takes the filling for an Egg McMuffin, an egg, American cheese and pork product, and nestles it in a pancake-like biscuit suffused with genuine fake-maple syrup flavor.

The McGriddle is just one moment in an era of extreme food combinations — a moment in which bacon plays a starring role from high cuisine to low. There's bacon ice cream; bacon-infused vodka; deep-fried bacon; chocolate-dipped bacon; bacon-wrapped hot dogs filled with cheese (which are fried and then battered and fried again); brioche bread pudding smothered in ba-

con sauce; there's hard-boiled eggs coated in mayonnaise encased in bacon — called, appropriately, the “heart attack snack”; bacon salt; bacon doughnuts, cupcakes and cookies; bacon mints; “baconnaise,” which Jon Stewart described as “for people who want to get heart disease but [are] too lazy to actually make bacon”; Wendy's “Baconnator,” six strips of bacon mounded atop a half-pound cheeseburger, which sold 25 million in its first eight weeks; and the outlandish bacon explosion, a barbecued meat brick composed of two pounds of bacon wrapped around two pounds of sausage.

It's easy to dismiss this gonzo gastronomy as typical American excess best followed with a Lipitor chaser. Behind the proliferation of bacon offerings, however, is a confluence of government policy, factory farming, the boom in fast food and manipulation of consumer taste that has turned bacon into a weapon of mass destruction.

While bacon's harmful effects were once limited to individual consumers, its production in vast porcine cities has become an environmental disaster. The system of industrialized hog (and beef and poultry) farming that has developed over the last 40 years turns out to be ideal for breeding novel strains of deadly pathogens such as the current pandemic of swine flu. If a new killer virus appears, like the Spanish Flu that killed tens of millions after World War I, factory farms will have played a central role in its genesis.

Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) churn out cheap but flavorless meat. However, for the CAFOs to exist there must be demand for the product. That's where the industrial food sector comes in. Chains like McDonald's, Chili's, Taco Bell, Applebee's and Pizza Hut approach the tasteless, limp factory beef, pork and chicken as a blank canvas with which to create highly enticing, even addictive, foods by pumping it full of fat, salt, sugar, chemicals and flavorings.

The chains lard on bacon in particular as a high-profit method of adding an item that has a “high flavor profile,” a “one-of-a-kind product that has no taste substitute.” According to David Kessler, author of *The End of Overeating*, a standard joke in the restaurant chain industry goes, “When in doubt, throw cheese and bacon on it.” In essence, the chains conjure up endless variations on the McGriddle that itself is the mass-produced version of the maple syrup-soaked bacon strip from our childhood.

Thus, the crisis of factory farming becomes its own solution through the use of the industrially produced bacon. We know our industrial food system is killing the planet and killing us with heart disease, diabetes and cancer, but how can we resist when it tastes oh-so-good?

McGriddles® Cakes:

Water, enriched bleached wheat flour (bleached flour, niacin, iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), sugar, dextrose, palm oil, soybean oil, brown sugar, leavening (sodium acid pyrophosphate, sodium bicarbonate, monocalcium phosphate), natural and artificial flavours (contain milk, soy), rice flour, whey powder, salt, modified tapioca starch, buttermilk powder, colour (caramel), soybean lecithin, carnauba wax, preservatives (TBHQ, citric acid).

Scrambled Eggs (2):

Pasteurized whole eggs with sodium acid pyrophosphate, citric acid and monosodium phosphate (added to preserve color), nisin (preservative). Prepared with Liquid Margarine: Liquid soybean oil, water, partially hydrogenated soybean oil, salt, hydrogenated cottonseed oil, soy lecithin, mono- and diglycerides, sodium benzoate and potassium sorbate (preservatives), artificial flavor, citric acid, vitamin A palmitate, beta carotene (color).

Processed Cheese Slice: Cheese (milk, modified milk ingredients, bacterial culture, salt, calcium chloride, microbial enzyme, lipase), modified milk ingredients, water, sodium citrate and/or sodium phosphate, salt, potassium sorbate, citric acid, colour, soy lecithin.

Bacon: Cured with water, salt, smoke flavoring, sodium phosphate, seasoning [gum acacia, smoke flavor, maltodextrin, hydrolyzed corn protein, natural flavor (vegetable source), autolyzed yeast extract, hydrolyzed corn, wheat, and soy protein, modified cornstarch, contains less than 2% of disodium guanylate, disodium inosinate, natural flavor (vegetable source), salt, succinic acid, xanthan gum], sodium erythorbate, sodium nitrite.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: **1 McGriddle**

Amount per Serving		
Calories 457		Calories from Fat 199
		% Daily Value *
Total Fat 22g		34%
Saturated Fat 7g		35%
Trans Fat 2g		
Cholesterol 247mg		82%
Sodium 1263mg		53%
Total Carbohydrate 44g		15%
Dietary Fiber 1g		5%
Sugars 16g		
Protein 20g		

Sources:

fatfreakitchen.com, nutritiondata.com, nutrition.mcdonalds.com



Our current food system has its roots in the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. With thousands of farming families fleeing the land, the Roosevelt administration dispensed credit and established price supports to stabilize the agricultural sector. The policy worked, but inadvertently created large grain surpluses. The problem of surpluses was temporarily alleviated by the demand created by the total mobilization of the state and nation during World

War II. But after the war, the question of what to do with the excess production became more pressing.

The answer was to dump the surpluses, first on a devastated Europe, then during the Korean War and finally as “humanitarian aid” to Third World countries.

In the name of national food security, the U.S. government subsidized farmers to produce more food than Americans could eat, and to dump that surplus as a weapon in the Cold War. This policy favored economy of scale and technological innovation to increase yields, because managing overproduction was more effective if the farm sector was reduced and subsidies targeted at large-scale monoculture producers rather than farmers who produced a variety of goods or had small plots of land.

While the U.S. farm population had been shrinking since the late 18th century, when it was 90 percent of the general population, in 1940, on the eve of the U.S. entry into World War II, some 18 percent of Americans were still farmers. By 1970 farmers accounted for only 4.6 percent of the populace because small farms could not compete with government-subsidized agribusiness.

Revolution” went global. And the 1980s saw the “Blue Revolution” — factory farming of fish and seafood. Over the past few decades, global meat production has increased by more than 500 percent.

In *Fast Food Nation* Eric Schlosser recounts the 1960s rise of Iowa Beef Packers (IBP), which revolutionized the beef industry. IBP came into being because it was able to exploit heavily subsidized water, fuel, land and grain for cattle feed; a national transportation infrastructure; and anti-union laws.

IBP's innovation was to combine slaughterhouses with enormous cattle feedlots. In the slaughterhouses, IBP used Fordist production techniques to de-skill meat cutting, paid low wages and busted unions to drive prices down and rake in profits. Faced with relentless low-cost competition from IBP, other meatpackers had to adapt or die. By 1971, notes Schlosser, the last Chicago stockyard shut down. (The modern poultry industry, typified by Tyson Foods and Perdue Farms, got its start during World War II with the help of price controls and government-created demand.)

In the 1970s Smithfield Foods revolutionized hog production. According to a *Rolling Stone* expose, Smithfield “controls every stage of production, from the moment a hog is born until the day it passes through the slaughterhouse. [It] imposed a new kind of contract on farmers: The company would own the living hogs; the contractors would raise the pigs and be responsible for managing the hog shit and disposing of dead hogs. The system made it impossible for small hog farmers to survive — those who could not handle thousands and thousands of pigs were driven out of business.”

In the 1950s there were 2.1 million hog farmers in the United States with an average of 31 hogs each. As of 2007 there were just 79,000 hog farmers left, averaging over 1,000 hogs each. A single Smithfield subsidiary in Utah holds half-a-million hogs and produces more shit every day than all the residents of Manhattan.

Rolling Stone's stunning report describes the lakes of manure that surround pig factories as Pepto Bismol colored because of the “interactions between the bacteria and blood and afterbirths and stillborn piglets and urine and excrement and chemicals and drugs.” (Vegetarians who think they are unaffected by this toxic fecal frappe should think again: The sludge is often used to “fertilize” crops that may find their way to your table.)

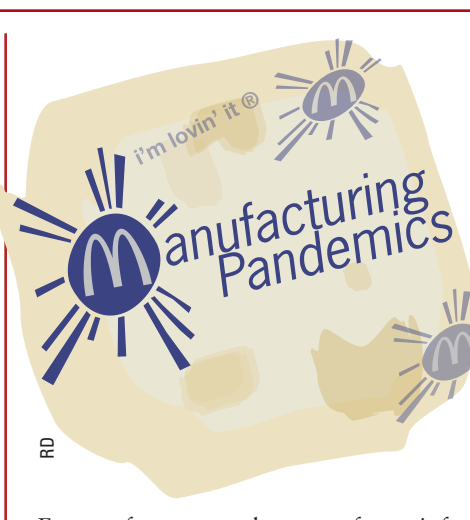
Beef, poultry and hog CAFOs could not exist without large-scale environmental devas-

tation. Governments at every level exempt these operations from laws and regulations covering air pollution, water pollution and solid waste disposal. They are also largely free from proper bio-surveillance, that is, public monitoring to detect, track and report on the outbreak of diseases.

Mike Davis, author of *The Monster at Our Door*, writes that scrutiny of the interface between human and animal diseases is “primitive, often non-existent” because companies such as Smithfield, IBP and Tyson would have to spend money on surveillance and upgrade conditions at their hellish animal factories.

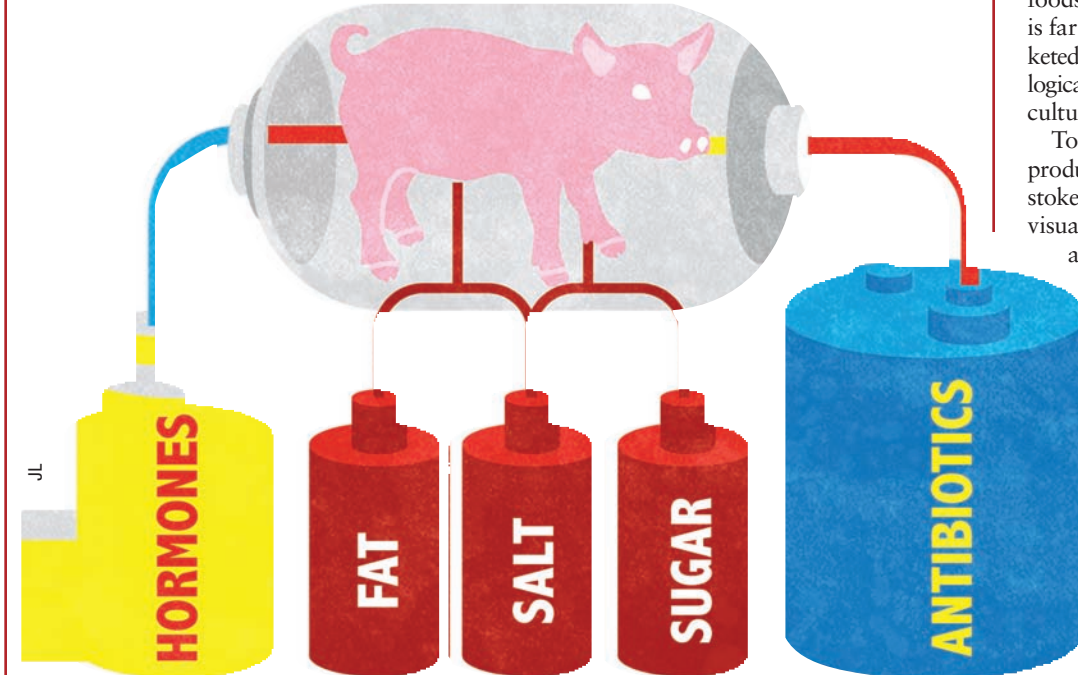
For Smithfield, devastating the environment is just a minor cost of doing business. In Virginia in 1997 the company was slapped with a \$12.6 million fine for 6,982 violations of the Clean Water Act—an average of \$1,800 per violation.

Rolling Stone paints a grim picture of what goes on inside a hog CAFO: “Sows are artificially inseminated and fed and delivered of their piglets in cages so small they cannot turn around. Forty fully grown 250-pound male hogs often occupy a pen the size of a tiny apartment. They trample each other to death. There is no sunlight, straw, fresh air or earth. The floors are slatted to allow excrement to fall into a catchment pit under the pens, but many things besides excrement can wind up in the pits: afterbirths, piglets accidentally crushed by their mothers, old batteries, broken bottles of insecticide, antibiotic syringes, stillborn pigs ...”



Factory farms are a hotspot of new infectious diseases. According to a former chief of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Special Pathogens Branch, “Intensive agricultural methods often mean that a single, genetically homogeneous species is raised in a limited area, creating a perfect target for emerging diseases, which proliferate happily among a large number of like animals in close proximity.”

In his book *Bird Flu*, Michael Greger, MD, writes, “Factory farms are considered such breeding grounds for disease that much of the animals' metabolic energy is spent just staying alive under such filthy, crowded, stressful conditions; normal physiological processes like growth are put on the back burner. Reduced growth rates in such hostile conditions cut into profits, but so would reducing the overcrowding. Antibiotics, then, became another crutch the industry can use to cut corners and cheat nature.”



But what happens when a poultry factory is doused with antivirals? According to Greger, “Say there's a one in a billion chance of an influenza virus developing resistance to amantadine [an antiviral drug]. Odds are, any virus we would come in contact with would be sensitive to the drug. But each infected bird poops out more than a billion viruses every day. The rest of their viral colleagues may be killed by the amantadine, but that one resistant strain of virus will be selected to spread and burst forth from the chicken farm, leading to widespread viral resistance and emptying our arsenal against bird flu.”

To compound the problem, “the raising of swine is increasingly centralized in huge operations, often adjacent to poultry farms and migratory bird habits,” writes Mike Davis. These operations often abut cities, meaning the “superurbanization of the human population ... has been paralleled by an equally dense urbanization of its meat supply.” These elements have produced an interspecies blender that is spitting out new viruses at an alarming rate, like the current swine flu bug.

While CAFOs excel in creating novel pathogens, they also churn out mountains of cheap but tasteless meat. So there is another important component to our deadly food system, and that's the science and industrial manufacturing of highly processed foods.



Just as factory farms depended on government policies and regulations to exist, the processed food industry could not exist without industrial farming. In 1966 McDonald's switched from using about 175 different suppliers of fresh potatoes to J.R. Simplot Company's frozen French fry. Within a decade, notes Eric Schlosser, McDonald's went from 725 outlets nationwide to more than 3,000.

Tyson did the same with chicken, which was seen as a healthy alternative to red meat. It teamed up with McDonald's to launch the Chicken McNugget nationwide in 1983. Within one month McDonald's became the number two chicken buyer in the country, behind KFC. The McNugget also transformed chicken processing. By 2000, Tyson made most of its money from processed chicken, selling its products to 90 of the 100 largest restaurant chains. As for the health benefits, Chicken McNuggets have twice as much fat per ounce as a McDonald's hamburger.

The entire food industry, perhaps best described as “eaterainment,” has refined the science of taking the cheap commodities pumped out by agribusiness and processing them into foodstuffs that are downright addictive. Food is far more than mere fuel intake. Food is marketed as a salve for our emotional and psychological ills, and dining out as a social activity, a cultural outlet and entertainment.

To get us in the door (or to pick up their product at the supermarket), food companies stoke our gustatory senses. The food has to be visually appealing, have the right feel, texture and smell. And most of all, it has to taste good. To that end, writes Kessler in *The End of Overeating*, the food industry has homed in on the “three points of the compass” — fat, salt and sugar.

One anonymous food-industry executive told Kessler, “Higher sugar, fat and salt make you want to eat more.” The executive admitted food is designed to be “highly hedonic,” and that the food industry is “the manipulator of the consumers' minds and desires.”

Referencing human and lab animal studies, Kessler shows how varying concentrations and combinations of fat and

sugar intensify production of neurochemicals, much the same way cocaine does. One professor of psychiatry explains that people self-administer food in search of “different stimulating and sedating effects,” — much like a “speedball,” which combines cocaine and heroin.

Kessler deconstructs numerous restaurant chain foods as nothing more than layers of fat, salt and sugar. Take the McGriddle: It starts with a “cake” of refined wheat flour (essentially a sugar), pumped with vegetable shortening, three kinds of sugar and salt. This cradles an egg, cheese and bacon topped by another cake. Thus, the McGriddle, from the bottom up, is fat, salt, sugar, fat and salt in the egg, then fat and salt in the cheese, fat and salt in the bacon, finished off with fat, salt and sugar. And this doesn't indicate how highly processed the sandwich is. McDonald's bacon, a presumably simple product, lists 18 separate ingredients, many of them used multiple times.

The success of the McGriddle and the Baconator has inspired an arms-race-like escalation among chain restaurants. Burger King's French Toast Sandwich is nearly identical to the McGriddle. In 2004 Hardee's went thermonuclear with its 1,420-calorie “Monster Thickburger,” laden with 107 grams of fat. And people are gobbling them up.

Perhaps you feel smug (and nauseated) by all this because you are a vegetarian, a vegan or a locavore, or you only eat organic and artisanal foods. Don't. Americans are in the thrall of the food industry. More than half the population eats fast food at least once a week; 92 percent eat fast food every month; and “every month about 90 percent of American children between the ages of three and nine visit a McDonald's,” states Schlosser.

The food industry has successfully appropriated the childhood creation of bacon dripping with syrup and repackaged it as a product that provides us with a coveted but deadly hit of salt, fat and sugar.

We know this food is killing us slowly with diseases like diabetes, heart disease and cancer. But we cannot stop, because we are addicts, and the food industry is the pusher. Even if we could opt out completely (which is almost impossible), it is still our land being ravaged, our water and air being poisoned, our dollars subsidizing the destruction, our public health at risk from bacterial and viral plagues.

Changing our perilous food system means making choices — not to shop for a greener planet, but to collectively dismantle factory farming, giant food corporations and the political system that allows them to exist. It's a big order, but it's the only option left on the menu.

This story was originally published on altnet.org



By David L. Wilson

Manuel “Mel” Zelaya is a rancher and business owner who wears large cowboy hats and, in November 2005, was elected president of Honduras, an impoverished Central American country with a population of 7.5 million. On June 28 the Honduran military, backed by the country’s elite, removed Zelaya from power. He instantly became a focus of attention for the U.S. media — his statements were examined, and his appearances at the United Nations and regional meetings were dutifully covered. Most media depicted him as a major “leftist strongman” seeking to extend his term of office in the style of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.

Honduras Coup Is Not About Zelaya

PEOPLE POWER: Hondurans are reinventing their democracy.
PHOTO: TIM RUSSO/CHIAPAS INDYMEDIA

But was this coup really about a leftist strongman? “What Zelaya has done has just been little reforms,” said Rafael Alegría, the leader of the local branch of the international group Vía Campesina (“Campesino Way”), to the Mexican daily *La Jornada* June 29, referring to initiatives like a long-overdue increase in the minimum wage, an expansion of primary education and a school meal program. “He isn’t a socialist or a revolutionary, but these reforms, which didn’t harm the oligarchy at all, have been enough for them to attack him furiously.” Zelaya wanted to hold the non-binding referendum June 28; the local elite and much of the U.S. media described as a power grab. In reality, Hondurans would simply have been asked whether they wanted to vote in November to elect a constituent assembly that would be responsible for rewriting the 1982 Constitution — and there is no way any constituent assembly could finish its work in time to keep Zelaya in office after his term expires next January. A more likely motive for the coup lies in the Honduran oligarchy’s fear of what would happen if the people got a chance to write their own Constitution.

RISE OF A MOVEMENT During the past few decades, Hondurans have created many diverse and vibrant grassroots movements: campesino organizations like Vía Campesina; three labor confederations, often competing, sometimes cooperating; a strong indigenous movement; Afro-Honduran groups like the Honduran Black Fraternal Organization (OFRANEH); human rights monitoring groups like the Committee of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees in Honduras (COFADEH); environmental groups; community radio stations like Radio Progreso; an anti-militarization move-

ment; women’s groups; student groups; and a nascent LGBT movement. Early this year, Honduran teachers went on strike for back pay and held a sit-in at the education ministry. In February, the Civic Council of Grassroots and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) organized a 12-day mobilization to protest the destruction of forests. Hundreds of indigenous Chortí blocked access to the Copán archeological park in April, probably Honduras’ most important ancient Mayan site, to press demands for land. These protests continued long-term struggles, some going back years, by groups that managed to grow despite repression from an elite backed by military regimes from 1963 into the 1980s, by the CIA-trained Battalion 316 death squad in the 1980s, by continuing U.S. military aid and a U.S. military presence at the Palmerola Air Base. The social movements, which frequently support each other and coordinate their actions, are now confronting the coup — bringing tens of thousands of protesters out on the streets, leading strikes, blocking highways, keeping the news flowing as the military shuts down independent media. If anything, the coup may be strengthening this movement. The growth of social movements in Honduras reflects a pattern. Everywhere you look in the hemisphere, the protagonists of the drama are increasingly “the people from below” — *los de abajo*, as Mariano Azuela called the subjects of his novel of the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

These struggles get little media attention here in the United States, but they have a direct bearing on *los de abajo* of our own country. Working Americans understand the effects of outsourcing industrial work to other countries, and they know about the pressure undocumented workers put on the wages of the native born. What they do not know is how these phenomena are linked to U.S. foreign policy.

WORKERS’ RIGHTS: THERE AND HERE Some 100,000 Hondurans now work in their country’s maquiladora sector, which assembles apparel and automotive parts largely for the U.S. market. About 400,000 Hondurans live in the United States, according to 2004 Census Bureau data. Hondurans don’t actually want to do backbreaking labor for minuscule pay in maquilas in San Pedro Sula, much less risk their lives crossing the border to work in the sweatshops of Los Angeles and New York. It is repression by the U.S.-backed military and oligarchy and the hardships resulting from U.S.-promoted economic policies and U.S.-dominated trade deals like the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement that have forced Hondurans into these jobs. It does not do U.S. workers any good to rail against foreign countries and “illegal” immigrants. If people here are serious about defending their standard of living, they have no choice but to oppose their government’s foreign policies and to support their counterparts in countries like Honduras. Unions like United Electrical Workers and organizations like the National Labor Committee, Students Against Sweatshops, and the Maquila Solidarity Network are already active in this work. We need to back them — and maybe learn some lessons from Latin America about how to fight for our rights.

David L. Wilson is co-editor of Weekly News Update on the Americas and co-author, with Jane Guskin, of The Politics of Immigration: Questions and Answers (Monthly Review, 2007). This article was adapted from an article published on monthlyreview.org.

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Blockade-Busting New Yorkers Head to Cuba

By Jaisal Noor

Harry D’Agostino seems like an average New York City high school student, but his summer plans are far from ordinary. On July 19, D’Agostino openly defied U.S. law by traveling to Cuba without government permission. He joined 60 other New Yorkers as part of the Venceremos Brigade, which is marking its 40th anniversary of bringing Americans to Cuba to deliver humanitarian aid and engage in volunteer work and political education. “What really attracted me to this trip,” said the 16-year-old D’Agostino, “is that we’re bringing material aid and we are going to be doing a lot of work there and show solidarity with the Cuban people.” Since 1969, the Venceremos Brigade (meaning “we shall overcome”) has led more than 8,000 Americans to Cuba as a challenge to both U.S. travel restrictions and the economic embargo Washington imposed on Cuba shortly after Fidel Castro’s provisional government came to power in 1959. The 2009 Venceremos Brigade trip comes three months after the Obama administration unveiled changes to U.S. Cuba policy. While the White House announced April 13 that it was lifting “all

restrictions on family visits to Cuba” and on remittances, critics described the changes as “minor adjustments” that only return policy to where it was under the Clinton administration. The group issued an open letter to President Obama July 13 asking him to “transcend the old, stalled politics of yesterday. We urge you to support lifting the travel restrictions for all U.S. citizens and residents, and take serious steps towards ending the economic embargo on Cuba.” During their two-week visit to Cuba, the “brigadistas” plan to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. PHOTO: NATALIA ORTIZ

ISLAND VISIT: Venceremos Brigade members stand alongside orphaned Cuban children during the delegation’s 2008 journey to Cuba.

tion and to participate in social and community projects including hurricane relief, agricultural programs, LGBT equality and healthcare. The New York-based Venceremos Brigade is partnered with Pastors for Peace, which is making its 20th annual trip to Cuba to deliver humanitarian aid, including medical supplies, educational material and sporting equipment. Lucia Bruno, communications director for Pastors for Peace, says the caravan is sending reconstruction supplies because “Cuba was hit by three hurricanes last year” and the embargo makes it difficult to purchase needed materials. One participant, Kathy Karlson, who has been on 10 brigades since 1970, expressed admiration for the Cuban government, saying it has maintained its “commitment to people to provide free healthcare and free education to all of its population.” In recent years, Venceremos Brigade participants have been posing a “travel challenge,” publicly protesting the travel restrictions by informing the U.S. government of their intent to break the travel ban. It is estimated that approximately 25,000 Americans quietly travel to Cuba every

year without legal authorization. The protest is not without risks. Diego Iniguez-Lopez, who is joining the 2009 brigade, received a letter from the U.S. government prior to his last trip in 2004 threatening him with a fine if he did not answer questions about his expenditures in Cuba. Iniguez-Lopez said the brigadistas’ legal team responded that the travelers claim their right under the Fifth Amendment to not incriminate themselves. “We will never ask for a license because we believe it is our right to travel to Cuba,” he said. On July 16, days before the brigade left, the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of a U.S. policy compelling citizens who travel to Cuba to answer questions about their spending there. The threat of punishment doesn’t faze D’Agostino, a member of the Socialist Workers Party. “I want to go see an example of a socialist revolution.” Iniguez-Lopez said he is returning to Cuba despite the threats, hoping to publicly challenge U.S. policy. “We are strengthened by Martin Luther King, Jr.’s conviction that ‘One has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws,’” Iniguez-Lopez said.

U.S.-RUSSIA ARMS PACT: Bombs Away?



BY INDEPENDENT
STAFF

The signing of a “joint understanding” by U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev July 6 to cut the two countries’ nuclear arsenals is a hopeful step forward in creating a nuclear weapons-free world.

However, as the agreement sidesteps numerous contentious issues — such as U.S. plans for anti-ballistic missile sites in Eastern Europe and NATO’s status — it still leaves humanity living under the threat of nuclear annihilation for years to come.

The document is not a treaty or legally binding document; it only signifies that the leaders “agree to agree” on reducing warheads and delivery systems. Negotiators will work on drafting a treaty with a projected duration of 10 years and a completion date of this December when the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (known as START I) expires.

The goal of a new treaty is to set a “ceiling” of 1,500 to 1,675 warheads and to limit long-range delivery systems between 500 to 1,100.

It remains unclear how much a new treaty will reduce the U.S. and Russia’s strategic nuclear weapons because they are covered by two separate treaties, START I and the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT). Under SORT, Russia and the United States are required to limit the number of warheads to somewhere between 1,700 and 2,200 by 2012.

On July 16, the U.S. State Department announced the United States had met its SORT requirements in May 2009 when it cut the number of “operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads” to 2,126. Only counting “operationally deployed” weapons, however, allows active nuclear weapons that are literally sitting on a shelf not to be counted. The actual U.S. stockpile, according to a recent estimate by the Federation of American Scientists, is 5,200 warheads. As for Russia, the State Department put its stockpile at 3,909 weapons as of January 2009.

The two countries are estimated to control more than 90 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons and dwarf the arsenals of the other “official” nuclear weapon states — China, France and Britain — as well as the “unofficial” nuclear weapon states of India, Israel, Pakistan and North Korea.

From one perspective, the Obama-Medvedev agreement might only cut stockpiles by 25 warheads — from 1,700 under SORT to 1,675 under a new treaty.

But if Russia and the United States can agree

on the principle of “irreversibility” to permanently eliminate non-deployed warheads and verification procedures, both of which SORT lacks, then actual stockpiles could be reduced by thousands of weapons.

Even if a new treaty is hammered out, it would still leave thousands of warheads, each approximately eight times more powerful than the bombs that obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Just a few of these weapons could decimate a nation and wreak unimaginable havoc on the global environment, economy, food supplies and the oceans.

The Obama-Medvedev joint understanding does boost the international non-proliferation regime, which has been weakened in recent years.

REVIVING THE NPT

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) came into force on March 5, 1970, and committed the five official nuclear weapons states “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.”

Every country in the world has since accepted the NPT, with the exception of Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea. But, nearly 40 years later, in the absence of progress toward complete disarmament, non-nuclear weapon states have been loath to adopt more stringent measures ensuring they do not develop the bomb.

The George W. Bush administration undercut the NPT during its eight years in office, rejecting numerous arms-control treaties and pursuing the acquisition of a new generation of weapons (as did other nuclear weapons states).

The Obama-Medvedev agreement re-establishes a commitment to the NPT obligations, but it still lacks a timeline. While Obama affirmed the goal of a nuclear weapons-free world, he added it will “not be

reached quickly — perhaps not in my lifetime.”

Perhaps most important, the new agreement revitalizes cooperation between the powers needed to address security challenges. As one former U.S. official said, the new agreement is “not about [arms] control, it’s about cooperation.” More than cutting the number of warheads, the United

States and Russia must also agree to take them off “hair-trigger alert” to reduce the risk of an accidental launch.

But this still leaves unresolved NATO’s status and the plans to deploy anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems in Eastern Europe. Although the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War and, with it, the rationale for NATO, the alliance has continued to expand eastward, providing Russia with an excuse to retain a substantial nuclear weapons stockpile.

Russia also sees the planned Eastern European ABM system, which the United States claims is intended to target Iran’s missiles, as aimed instead towards its own nuclear arsenal. A limited ABM system has no hope of defeating Russia’s array of nuclear weapons, but it provides Russia with a further rationale, one of deterrence, for hanging on to a variety of weapons and delivery systems.

Some observers suggest that the United States is using the ABM system as a bargaining chip to pressure Russia to agree to end its transfer of nuclear energy technology to Iran.

While negotiations proceed on a new treaty, the Obama administration is undertaking a review and overhaul of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), the policy document governing U.S. nuclear weapons. The Bush administration’s NPR had lowered the threshold for use of nuclear weapons and expanded the mandate for such use. Members of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Commission have recommended that, beyond rescinding Bush’s expansion of the role of nuclear weapons, Obama’s NPR should unambiguously assert that the sole purpose of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter their use by others.

Such a limited role for nuclear weapons could lead to a global no-first-use policy and legally binding assurances that nuclear weapons will never be used against a non-nuclear weapon state. These are measures that non-nuclear weapon states have long demanded as ways to strengthen the NPT.

int’l briefs

VIVA PALESTINA



The U.S. activist group Viva Palestina broke through the Israeli blockade July 16 and entered Gaza for 24 hours to deliver humanitarian supplies.

While the group distributed more than \$1 million in medical supplies, the 100-member convoy also sought to hear, and then recount in the United States, stories about the experiences of Gazans who have lived under more than 60 years of occupation. Activists also and met with local politicians and relatives of political prisoners.

Former Green Party presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney, along with New York Councilperson Charles Barron (D-Brooklyn), were also part of the convoy.

G8 BULLIES CLIMATE TALKS

The climate talks at the G8 summit in L’Aquila, Italy, drew to a close July 10 with G8 industrialized nations vowing to cut emissions by 80 percent by 2050.

However, G8 nations refused to set targets for 2020, as a result, the G5 group of emerging economies refused to commit to any targets for cutting emissions.

Emerging countries also called on industrialized countries to help them build low-carbon economies through financing and technology transfers. However, G8 countries have refused to commit themselves to contributing funding, which according to some experts, might top \$150 billion a year.

In the wake of such inaction, environmental activist organization 350.org is planning a Global Day of Action Oct. 24 to pressure politicians attending December’s U.N. Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, to make more robust changes.

AFGHANISTAN WAR CRIMES

Physicians for Human Rights is calling for an inquiry into the Bush administration’s failure to investigate possible war crimes in Afghanistan.

As many as 2,000 Taliban soldiers were suffocated to death in container trucks and then buried in mass graves after surrendering to Afghan troops, who were fighting under U.S. military forces in 2001.

Meanwhile, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates recently announced plans to increase the number of soldiers in the Army by 22,000 over the next three years to meet the “persistent pace” of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to *The New York Times*.

July 2009 has been the deadliest month for the U.S. military and its allies in Afghanistan, with 62 troops killed by July 22.

UNION BOYCOTTS HONDURAN BOATS

The International Transport Workers’ Federation, which represents more than 600 unions worldwide, called on its more than four million members to protest Honduran ships July 17 in an effort to oppose the recent military coup.

The federation said it hopes these efforts will “defend democracy” and support the Organization of American States’ denunciation of the ousting of President Manuel Zelaya June 28.

The federation also stated that its goal was to impede loading and unloading of all 650 ships flying the Honduran flag.

Man in the Mirror

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

What is wrong with Michael Jackson?” I asked so many times it became a punch line. Like most jokes, it overpowered the anxiety that I felt when looking at Michael’s thinning body and ghoulish face.

Now that he’s dead, I can ask what happened to him and why I didn’t stop joking. Maybe I couldn’t afford empathy while he was alive. He might release another desperate album, dangle his toddler over a hotel railing again, a new photo of his face would make the news, or another boy would leave his bed singed by handprints.

But I still followed the news because before he was “Wacko Jacko” he was simply Michael. He achieved a first name intimacy with the world.

Everyone loved him, and because he came from us, his stardom meant we could be loved. He was skinny and coy and he moon-walked. He glided over sidewalks, spun and never fell. That’s what I loved most about him.

I was only seven years old but already knew that color meant weight. We lived in the projects of Harrisburg, Pa., where poverty was a daily pressure; eyes watched me and I watched myself. I was told to lock the door because junkies might break in, to close window shades so people didn’t see what we had and not to talk about our business in the street. Danger, real and imagined, surrounded us. But at night, we watched TV, and Mom pointed over my shoulder at Michael in the “Billie Jean” video, dancing through trash-strewn streets as if free from our weight. “He’s the first black man on MTV,” she said. And I saw the city glow beneath his feet.

Michael also taught me how to be ugly. At school we divided the playground into Good Clothes versus Bad Clothes. The Good Clothes kids had name-brand sneakers, pressed hair and sports team shirts. They laughed at us with our knock-off Velcro shoes, threadbare pants and checkered shirts. They laughed until “Thriller” hit and we were pushing each other out of the way to do the zombie dance. But the Good Clothes were too careful, trying not to scrape their shoes or stain their pants and gave up as the Bad Clothes kids took over. We already looked like zombies, gaunt, tattered and exuberant. We rolled and kicked our feet and thrust our arms around our heads because we had nothing left to lose. We weren’t worried about wrecking our clothes. Our ugliness was power and we never let them forget it.

Michael was left behind when we leapt into adolescence. In high school, music was currency from the adult world, and we traded it like cigarettes in prison. “You got

Motley Crue?” We’d look around. “Yeah, you got NWA?” “No, but I got Ice-T.” “Alright, hit me.” The more loud, angry, funky and obscure the music was, the higher one’s reputation. No one traded Michael. He was too falsetto, too boyish for those of us posing like the tough asses on “Yo! MTV Raps.” By the time Michael’s 1987 *Bad* record came out he was a target of scorn. We scrawled on the album posters in the subway, Bad Nose Job, Bad Skin Cream, Bad Music. Somehow we sensed that however eager we were to leave childhood, Michael was content to stay in it.

Over the years he flashed his glove on TV and it seemed that his shades, military jacket and boots were a sarcophagus. He created a fantasy world called Neverland. He purchased llamas and monkeys. He bought whiteness. He brought children into his bed. Each new headline was a police-line-do-not-cross tape across memories where a wonder-man danced free and the city could glow under our feet.

MICHAEL JACKSON’S MASK

He was a joke, an embarrassment, until I saw the 1999 satirical war drama *Three Kings*. The film, which is set during the 1991 Iraqi uprising against Saddam Hussein after the Gulf War, features a trio of greedy U.S. soldiers who steal Kuwaiti gold. One soldier, Troy Barlow, played by Mark Wahlberg, is caught by Iraqi soldiers and taken into a basement to be tortured. The Iraqi officer asks him coolly, “What is the problem with Michael Jackson?”

The Iraqi holds up his hand as if it’s the glittering glove. “He come to Egypt. Hello I’m Michael Jackson with my chop-up face. Your country make him chop up his face,” he says.

“That’s bullshit; he did it to himself,” Wahlberg says. The Iraqi officer slams him. “It is obvious! A black man make the skin white and the hair straight and you know why? Your sick fuckin’ country make the black man hate himself just like you hate the Arab and the children you bomb over here.”

I paused the scene and thought, “Yeah, Michael is a symptom of America. He’s not a joke, but a warning.”

I pulled the 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. Du Bois off my shelf to read his definition of “double-consciousness,” to help me understand how the man who sang soul and neo-soul could destroy his own.



His classic line gushed from that split between who we are and who others want us to be: “This sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”

In 2007, I walked into the classroom where I taught an African-American literature course at SUNY Old Westbury. The students sized me up as I handed out papers and said, “Please flip them over.” They did and saw photocopies of Michael’s face spanning from beautiful brown to ghostly white. Also included were photographs of Lil’ Kim from sullen pout to bulb-cheeked mannequin.

“We assume,” I intoned, “ideas are immaterial. But hopefully these images show that ideas are real and can determine our lives.”

They gawked at the photos. “How many of us have been called too fat, too thin, too dark or too nappy and stood in front of a mirror wanting to be different?”

Everyone raised their hand, including me. “So did they; except their self-hate had a budget. Part of the goal of Black literature is to shift the questioning from our self-worth

to question the worth of the ideas we believe in. Ideas of beauty. Ideas of power.”

We read Du Bois and began to see the invisible eye that floats above us, watching us watch ourselves. A young man sitting mid-row shook his head. “They called me Zulu, shadow, and remember that Dave Chappelle skit?” He swallowed slowly. “Darkness. Darkness. They were on me with that. Darkness.” People hummed “yes” as the student’s words flowed over shame like a stream.

After class ended I stared at Michael as I stacked papers. “You’re not going to last long,” I muttered.

When the news of his death hit, I was sad, but not shocked. He looked dead already, a waif spirit looking for an exit out of the world.

In the midst of the eulogies, I remembered when he was killing himself slowly in public and most of us, me included, made jokes about it. Although his music is the gift most celebrated, it’s the lesson he couldn’t learn that I keep.

At some point, to survive, we have to take off the mask we wear for others and demand to be loved without it.

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT?

BELOW 14TH ST.
Grand St. Settlement
Pitt & Rivington Sts.

Bluestockings
172 Allen St.

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

ABC No Rio
156 Rivington St.

Jefferson Market Library
Sixth Ave. & 9th St.

St. Mark’s Bookshop
31 Third Avenue

4th Street Food Co-op
58 E. 4th St.

Think Coffee
248 Mercer St.

Theatre for the New City
155 First Ave.

14TH TO 96TH ST.
MNN
537 W. 59th St.

Revolution Books
146 W. 26th St.

Housing Conservation Coordinators
777 Tenth Ave.

Muhlenberg Library
209 W. 23rd St.

ABOVE 96TH ST.
Strictly Roots Restaurant
2058 Seventh Ave.

George Bruce Library
518 W. 125th St.

Countee Cullen Library
104 W. 136th St.

Aguilar Library
174 E. 10th St.

Uptown Sister’s Books
1942 Amsterdam Ave.

BROOKLYN Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy.

BAM
30 Lafayette Ave.

Vox Pop
1022 Cortelyou Rd.

Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.

Tillie’s of Brooklyn
248 DeKalb Ave.

Tea Lounge
837 Union St.

Video Gallery
310 Seventh Ave.

Ozzie’s Coffee Shop
249 Fifth Ave.
57 Seventh Ave.

’sNice Café
315 Fifth Ave.

Verb Café
218 Bedford Ave.

Videology
308 Bedford Ave.

Archive Café
49 Bogart St.

Sisters Community Hardware
900 Fulton St.

Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.

Bedford Library
496 Franklin St.

Pacific St. Library
25 Fourth Ave.

Heights Coffee
333 Flatbush Ave.

Myrtle Ave. Pharmacy
329 Myrtle Ave.

Pillow Café
505 Myrtle Ave.

K-Dog
43 Lincoln Rd.

STATEN ISLAND
St. George Library
5 Central Ave.

Port Richmond Research Library
75 Bennett St.

BRONX
The Point
940 Garrison Ave.

Brook Park
141st St. & Brook Ave.

Mothers on the Move
928 Intervale St.

South Bronx Food Co-op
Melrose Ave. & 157th St.

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An Enemy for the People

Public Enemies
DIRECTED BY MICHAEL MANN
UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, 2009

With *Public Enemies*, Michael Mann has crafted his most nostalgic and firmly genre-rooted work to date. The director’s latest feature is a throwback to the classical gangster films of the 1930s, when the notoriety of real-life criminals like John Dillinger blended with the exploits of their fictional counterparts to shape an enduring myth of outlaw populism. Accordingly, Mann’s Dillinger (Johnny Depp) embodies a larger-than-life blend of historical figure and film-historical character. Never more so than in the made-for-the-movies build-up to his death scene, he gravitates toward the big screen as if it were his mirror image.

This is Mann’s second period piece, and like his earlier *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), its narrative chronicles a pivotal moment in the American experience, namely the culture’s entry into modernity, which both empowers and alienates Dillinger. Fast cars and automatic weapons are the tools of his bank-robbing trade, but burgeoning information technology subjects him to relentless surveillance and persecution by special FBI agent Melvin Purvis (Christian Bale) and his team of G-men. The paradox of Dillinger is also his tragedy: A thoroughly modern man, he holds an old-fashioned, romantic worldview akin to the filmmaker’s.

Mann’s extraordinary eye for realistic detail and his impeccable, sumptuous sense of style imbue the film with a dark glamour, redolent of the eponymous anti-hero’s fate. Like all Mann protagonists, Dillinger is a solitary warrior whose increasing isolation enhances his mystique. One by one, his fellow gang members fall victim to the war on crime waged by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover (Billy Crudup); his support network dwindles as his high-profile status makes him a liability to underworld operations and his romance with Billie Frechette (Marion Cotillard) is severed upon her arrest and detainment. Left alone and crying, Dillinger proceeds to embrace



his own larger-than-life public image to the point of becoming its foremost observer.

He unobtrusively walks into Chicago police headquarters, and while the cops huddle around the radio listening to baseball coverage, he takes in the display of pictures and documents used to hunt him and his cohorts down. Mann highlights this enactment of anonymity not to reveal the private man behind the public enemy, but to showcase how Dillinger makes manifest his destiny by identifying with the iconic presence he has cultivated. Personable yet aloof, Depp deftly underplays Dillinger’s grandeur to match the grim elegance of the gangster’s universe, and in a significant departure from the Tim Burton-shaped persona that has become second nature to him, exhibits a remarkable caliber of acting.

Also like *Mohicans*, albeit more implicitly, *Public Enemies* historicizes the questionable inclusiveness and pluralism of American democracy. The resonance of Dillinger’s death in 1934 triggered a vehement reaction from Hollywood’s Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association, which required all films made after 1934 to receive approval prior to their release, and led to the declaration of a moratorium on the gangster film genre the following year. This censorship aimed not only to appease concerns about the genre’s challenge to moral propriety, but also to address deep-rooted anxieties over its resistance to the consolidation of national identity, as movie gangsters brought to unprecedented

prominence the look, talk and pedigree of the nation’s ethnic urban working class.

Mann portrays Dillinger as a natural, indiscriminate people’s champion by virtue of his total outsider sensibility. He has no qualms about Frechette’s Native American background and holds no prejudice against the foreign descent of Anna Sage (Branka Katic), the Romanian prostitute who ends up betraying him when threatened with deportation. More of an elegiac Douglas Fairbanks (whose agility Dillinger matched, earning himself the nickname of “Jack-rabbit”) than big shot wannabe, he is a transitional figure, rebel to the leveling consumer capitalism and nativist-Protestant Immigration Acts of the Jazz Age, misfit between Prohibition repeal and New Deal promise.

Public Enemies is arguably a less personal film than any previous screen adaptation of Dillinger’s story. Less factual in tone and psychologically oriented than Max Nosseck’s unadorned 1945 *Dillinger*, and shunning the brawny revisionism of John Milius’ underrated 1973 interpretation of the same title, Mann’s retelling enshrines the gangster as a legend in his own time and ours alike. We get to see Dillinger not as an individual opportunist, but as an enemy for the public of the Great Depression. The relevance of his legacy to the current recession proves a need for poetic justice meted out by unlikely heroes rather than overblown recriminations against sad-sack villains.

—KENNETH CRAB

Send in the Clones

Moon
DIRECTED BY DUNCAN JONES
SONY PICTURES CLASSICS, 2009

[Editor’s note: This review contains spoilers!]

He stares at the screen, waiting. His wife finally appears. “Hey, someone wants to say something to you.” She hoists his daughter up. “Hi, Daddy.” He strokes the screen. Outside is the lunar landscape, vast starry space and, in the distance, Earth, where his family lives. After a three-year contract as the sole employee working to mine the Moon for fuel, astronaut Sam Bell is going home.

In the film *Moon*, Bell (played by Sam Rockwell) ambles through work chatting with GERTY, the intelligent computer that provides his only real-time communication. In two weeks he is scheduled to return to Earth. Like Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey* or Tom Hanks in *Cast Away*, Bell is a symbol of an alienated man longing for home. It’s a story retold endlessly, but what matters is how we are lost and what home means.

Bell represents the epitome of the post-industrial worker, trapped in a dull drone, eyes weary from computer screens, insecure at being an appendage to a bureaucracy more valuable than life. This is our inheritance. Our generation walked into the history of the preceding one and we’re looking for an exit. For Bell, that exit is his family — that is, until he learns that not even they are real.

When the mining equipment breaks, Bell heads to the lunar mine to observe the scene, but sees instead a hallucination of his wife and crashes, bringing life as he knows it to a jarring halt. He wakes up in the infirmary, looking younger, but dazed. Once he learns that the mining tank is broken, he takes an unauthorized trip back to the site. He pries open its lid and finds a man inside. Bell hauls him to base, lays him on the floor and stares at his own face.

The injured man revives and Bell circles Bell. “It’s obvious you’re a clone,” one says. The young Bell grimaces, “Maybe you’re the clone.” But they suspect a deeper horror. The older Bell hobbles to the computer and unlocks a secret record of Bells, detailing how each one, eager to return home, became sick, was told to lie in an Earthbound capsule and was cremated.

He limps to the room, fingers the ash and pulls up a floor panel. Both clones climb down into a hall of morgue-like drawers. They pull one out and see a sleeping Bell.

They discover that they are both clones and their genetic clock stops at three years. It’s why they get sick at the end. They are not meant to leave. They are disposable men.

It’s a metaphor for modern workers, interchangeable, expendable, their lives merely means to the end of profit. Young Bell says flatly, “That team the company sent to fix the mining tank. They’re coming to kill us. We weren’t supposed to be awake at the same time. We weren’t



supposed to know the truth.”

But the older Bell drives a moon rover beyond the base, pulls out a laptop and calls home. A woman answers. He asks to speak to his wife. “She died years ago. I’m her daughter.” His lips purse, “Oh, sweetie, how did Mommy die? Are you okay?” Befuddled, she creases her eyebrows: “Dad? Someone’s asking about Mom.” A man’s voice booms, “Who is it?” It’s the original Bell, and the clone shuts the laptop. He turns and turns in his seat, staring at Earth, saying, “I want to go home. I want to go home.”

The movie critiques the origin-journey, but unlike Homer’s *Odyssey*, there is no home. Bell remembers a life he did not actually live. Against the humanist tradition in which inside each of us is a unique soul that transcends the body, *Moon* shows us a body trapped in a manufactured soul.

It is a critique that philosopher Michel Foucault began in *Discipline and Punish*, where he writes, “It would be wrong to say the soul is an illusion. ... It exists, it is produced by the functioning of power. The soul is the effect of political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body.”

Home was a false memory, installed by the corporation to trick him into three hard years of work, the years that end up defining his short life. At the end, the execution team sent by Lunar Industries finds the older Bell in the crashed rover. He has planted himself inside so they wouldn’t look for the young Bell who now has a chance, not to go home, but rather to create one.

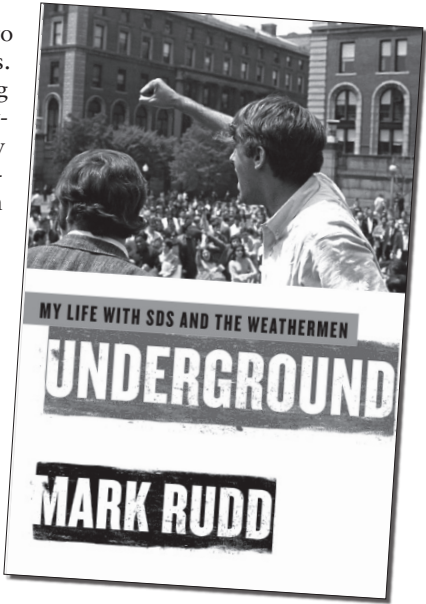
—NICHOLAS POWERS

Revelation Revolution

Underground: My Life with SDS and the Weathermen
By MARK RUDD
HARPER COLLINS, 2009

Those who have characterized Mark Rudd’s memoir, *Underground*, as unapologetic must not have read it. The book passionately reflects on the 1960s and 1970s, a time when a new world order seemed not only possible, but likely. Rudd begins this well-written, almost-confessional book with an account of entering college in the fall of 1965. He admits that Columbia University was a dream come true, since it was such a radical departure from his middle-class, suburban upbringing in New Jersey. At Columbia, he was encouraged to read revolutionary theorists, such as Malcolm X, and was deeply affected by David Gilbert, the chair of the university’s Independent Committee on Vietnam, who openly declared his opposition to the war and suggested that antiwar activists adhere to their beliefs instead of behaving like “good Germans.” As a Jew reared in the shadow of the Holocaust, Rudd found Gilbert’s words potent and quickly became immersed in campus activism, soon joining Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The discovery of Columbia’s connection to the Institute for Defense Analyses, a think tank affiliated with the Pentagon, in

early 1967 led SDS members to intensify their anti-war efforts. Combined with pre-existing university plans to raze several buildings in largely Black Harlem for the construction of a gymnasium in Morningside Park, the predominantly progressive student body felt pushed to the brink. Due to an administration crackdown, students decided to occupy five buildings on the Columbia campus in April 1968. African-American students and Harlem residents entered Hamilton Hall and refused to leave. White students took over Low Library and other surrounding buildings and penned demands. Rudd’s excitement over the week-long sit-in is palpable, and readers who have ever immersed themselves in organizing will feel the contagion. Rudd writes with vivid fury about the police violence that ended the occupation and rails against a mainstream media that portrayed the protesters as “lunatic, destructive kids.” He is also conscious, albeit in hindsight, of the media’s fixation on him as the archetypical leader — the charismatic white man ostensibly in charge. At the time, however, Rudd savored the attention and admits to rampant womanizing. After being expelled from Columbia in spring of 1968, he became a “traveling salesman for SDS” speaking throughout the country to ramp up opposition to the war. However, as SDS grew, factions emerged which ultimately destroyed the largest student mobilization in U.S. history. While Rudd helped found the most radical portion in SDS, the Weathermen, in 1969, he had early concerns about the group’s dogmatism. “I did not realize at the time that we had unwittingly reproduced conditions that all hermetically sealed cults use: isolation, sleep deprivation, arbitrary acts of loyalty, even sexual initiation as bonding,” he writes. Rudd buried these worries as the Weathermen became the Weather Underground, which ultimately



carried out 24 property-destroying bombings across the United States. He writes that he accepted the idea — now recognized as delusional — that “we had begun the war against the pigs” and describes a mood that is difficult to fathom in 2009. In retrospect he calls it “a fantasy of revolutionary urban-guerrilla warfare.” This fantasy ground to a halt when a 1970 plan to bomb New Jersey’s Fort Dix went awry, killing three of Rudd’s comrades and destroying the Greenwich Village townhouse the would-be bomb makers were using. Rudd, his girlfriend Sue LeGrand, and other Weatherpeople quickly fled underground. Moving between safe houses sent Rudd into a near-suicidal depression, and his graphic description of severing ties with everything and everybody garners sympathy. Nonetheless, he and LeGrand cobbled together a sub rosa life. Their first child was born in 1974, and they had a second child after he surrendered in 1978. The decision to resurface came after seven-and-a-half years on the lam; Rudd could no longer stand living with constant anxiety. Rudd eventually paid a fine and settled in New Mexico. When his relationship with LeGrand ended, he finished his degree and spent more than two decades teaching mathematics at a community college in Albuquerque, N.M. He has continued his work as a non-violent activist and organizer through his involvement with Native American land rights and antiwar and anti-militarization efforts. *Underground’s* poignancy is underscored by Rudd’s conclusion: “The Weather Underground didn’t seem to affect anybody at all. We were not part of most people’s universe, even of those who were still working in what remained of the movement.” This sobering and heartfelt statement, bolstered by his across-the-board denunciation of violence, clearly speaks to 21st century activists who are eager for rapid change.

—ELEANOR BADER



comments Continued from Page 2

BORDERS AND MOTHERHOOD
Responses to “A Mother’s Nightmare: A Senegalese Woman Struggles to Save Her Daughters,” June 25:

I have a hard time believing how inhumane our immigration system has become and to think that it can even get worse. I pray for a positive solution for this mom and her kids. I’m also a mom and think we should all stand up for moms like her who face the worst fate — separation from her children.

—MAY

I’m so glad that you all are covering this story and speaking out for the rights of immigrants. Thank you for the great coverage and keeping us aware of the issues.

—BETTY MING LIU

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MON AUG 3, 7PM • \$5 SUGG
READING: **BRANDING NEW YORK.** Author Miriam Greenberg reads from her book, *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis was Sold to the World*, which explains how NYC was carefully branded in the 1970s fiscal crisis to define the city by tourism, finance and real estate.

THURS AUG 6, 7PM • \$5 SUGG
READING: **HISTORY OF COOPERATION.** Author John Curl will read from his new book, *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America*, which discusses the role cooperation has played throughout U.S. history as well as the 120 million Americans who belong to co-ops today.

SUN AUG 9, 7PM • \$5 SUGG
READING: **SOMETIMES WE WALK ALONE.** Author Ankur Shah reads from her book, *Sometimes We Walk Alone*, in which she documents her journey following Mahatma Gandhi’s famous “salt march,” the largest civil disobedience campaign in the world.

TUES AUG 11, 7PM • \$5 SUGG
READING: **ILLNESS AND ACTIVISM.** Author Ben Holtzman discusses his ‘zine *Sick: A Compilation ‘zine on Physical Illness*, which brings together a collective voice of those impacted by illness within Left/DIY communities and how to create a support system.

FRI AUG 14, 7PM • \$5 SUGG
READING: **ALLAH’S GARDEN.** Author Thomas Hollowell discusses a western Sahara environmental conflict that he documents in his book, *Allah’s Garden*.

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—Jacqueline Rose, author, *The Question of Zion*

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